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SUBJECT: TFFLU01: CHILE HAS 29 CONFIRMED H1N1 CASES; THE MOST IN
SOUTH AMERICA

REFS: (A) Santiago 470; (B) Santiago 411; (C) Santiago 402

¶1. According to the Ministry of Health's website (www.minsal.cl), as of May 21, Chile has twenty-nine confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza. There have been no H1N1-related deaths. Many of the cases are school children with mild symptoms, who are being treated at home.

29 CONFIRMED CASES OF H1N1; MOST ARE MILD

¶2. The Institute of Public Health has confirmed 29 cases of influenza A-H1N1 in Chile. The Ministry of Health (MOH) website reports that most patients have mild symptoms, similar to cases of seasonal influenza, and are in good enough condition to receive treatment at home.

¶3. The website also warns the virus is easily transmitted via person-to-person contact. This is cited the reason for the number of cases detected in schools in the metropolitan Santiago area and the speed with which the outbreak has developed, i.e., up from 4 cases less than 4 days ago (ref a). The MOH reiterated its call for the population not to panic, commenting that the H1N1 outbreak is similar to other seasonal influenza viruses, and that Chile has significant experience combating flu through regular winter campaigns.

MOH WORKING ON PREVENTATIVE CAMPAIGN WITH EDUCATORS

¶4. The Ministries of Health and Education, along with several school associations, is developing a campaign in the schools to both report on the disease and promote preventive behaviors among students and staff.

PRESIDENT BACHELET URGES CALM; PRAISES MOH RESPONSE

¶5. In her May 21 state of the union address, Chile's President, Michelle Bachelet, praise the MOH's "record time" for responding to the crisis and called for the population to remain calm because "the capacity of public health is up to the challenge." She also said "alarmist voices" were unjustified because Chile's health system is prepared and can ensure proper health care for Chilean citizens.

CHILD OF EMBASSY EMPLOYEE HAD CONTACT WITH H1N1 CASE

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¶6. On May 22, an Embassy Locally Employed Staff (LES) member reported that her child had direct contact with one of the confirmed H1N1 cases. The employee's child has been diagnosed as having an influenza type A virus and is being tested for H1N1. Members of the employee's household are taking Tamiflu and she has been advised to stay home from work for 7 days as a preventative measure.

MASKS FOR EMBASSY EMPLOYEES

¶7. Per Department guidance, Post will be distributing masks to all Direct-Hire Americans, their EFMs and all LES, for use only if anyone becomes ill and needs to go to a health center for diagnosis and/or treatment. Post's H1N1 taskforce continues to meet regularly and will provide updates to the Department, as needed.
SIMONS